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· REMEMBER · OREGON

By
Dudley G.
Wooten



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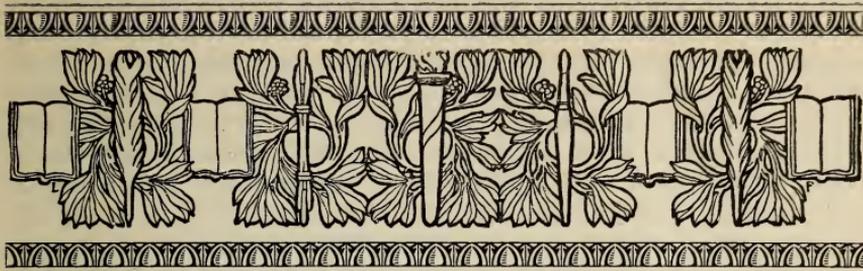
This article, in which the Honorable Dudley G. Wooten, fully and freely tells the story of the Oregon campaign and trenchantly depicts its lessons, was prepared at the special request of The American Publishing Society.

Although Mr. Wooten stood in the vortex opposing that hurricane of hate, he treats with judicial calm of the activities of the forces of bigotry which waged the most intensely bitter battle this country has seen in a century. Candidly and for constructive ends he tells Catholics of their shortcomings.

In July last, Mr. Wooten, whose home is in Seattle, went to Portland at the urgent call of Archbishop Christie, to assume management of the Catholic campaign against the so-called Compulsory Education Bill, which had for its object the destruction of all private and parochial schools in Oregon. He organized the "Catholic Civic Rights Association of Oregon," with headquarters in Portland, and thence directed the fight for freedom of education and religion until election day, besides visiting every county in the state and speaking one or more times in all the principal towns and cities.

His knowledge, therefore, of the Oregon situation and of the influences that controlled the election is first-hand and inside information.

Mr. Wooten uses the example of Oregon as a warning that what happened in Oregon may happen in other States unless we are less apathetic and more vigilant in defending our rights.



Remember Oregon

By DUDLEY G. WOOTEN



ON NOVEMBER 7, 1922, the people of Oregon adopted the Initiative Bill destroying all private and parochial elementary schools in that State, after a bitter and close campaign. The total vote upon this measure was 199,440, of which 106,910 were affirmative and 92,530 were negative, being a majority of 14,370 in favor of the Bill. According to the record, there were 345,000 registered voters in the State, of whom 89,000 were nominally Democrats and 238,000 Republicans, with the remainder scattered or undesignated. The Democratic candidate for Governor was elected by a majority of 31,000 votes over his Republican opponent, but the total vote for Governor was much greater than that cast on the school bill. The Democratic candidate had openly declared himself in favor of the Bill, while his rival was supposed to be against it, although he gave no public expression of his views during the campaign. The Governor-elect received the solid support of the Ku Klux Klan and of all other anti-Catholic elements, while the defeated Republican candidate received practically the entire Catholic vote and that of most of the people who opposed the measure, with perhaps some Republicans who favored it. The Catholics, even if all were registered and voting, did not number over 35,000, and in this election not over 30,000 actually voted on the school question, making it apparent that more than 60,000 non-Catholics cast their ballots in the negative.

It is highly important that a correct estimate be made of the political conditions that contributed to the above result, in order to understand how it was possible to initiate and adopt a law so at variance with American principles and traditions. Similar conditions and like methods of legislation exist in greater or less degree in many other States, and are likely to enter into kindred movements elsewhere. It is time that lovers of constitutional government and reasonable liberty should analyze the true character and logical consequences of the boasted "progressivism" that is gradually destroying the inheritance and institutions of the Republic.

Several years ago, in a speech before a Bar meeting in the Pacific Northwest, Ex-President, now Chief Justice, Taft declared that the State of Oregon had served a useful function in the recent life of the Nation, as a sort of laboratory for trying out new and dangerous experiments in the political and social world, since her remoteness from the centers of population in the older portions of the Union enabled her to conduct such exploits without serious hazard to the rest of the country. Oregon has indeed been the prolific mother of freak legislation, explosive demogogy, and reckless iconoclasm in politics and sociology, and her location in this distant corner of the national territory has not exempted other communities from the contagion of her unhealthy radicalism.

At the time this school bill was being initiated by petition one of its chief proponents, in an interview in a Portland newspaper, declared in so many words that "in the older and more thickly settled States of the East it would be impossible to put such a bill through, so we have concluded to make a beginning in Oregon to set an example for the whole country."

The example has been set, and it can be followed wherever the local politics and governmental methods are anything like those in that State, which means in at least twenty other American commonwealths. It is idle to rail at or ridicule existing facts in the present temper and prevailing tendencies of public sentiment. The sensible and practical thing to do is to study the situation and to meet it by utilizing and counteracting the agencies that have brought it about.

The "Oregon System," as its admirers fondly call it, is curiously compounded of socialistic paternalism, altruistic democracy, and the worst form of state absolutism. It was borrowed from the communism of Australasia and the democratic cantons of Switzerland, and is fundamentally incom-

patible with the doctrines and practice of constitutional, representative republicanism, such as the founders of the United States believed in and established when they achieved their independence and framed our governments, state and federal. But it is firmly entrenched in the affections of the Oregon people and has gained a measurable acceptance in one form or another all over the Union. It consists mainly of the Direct Primaries, the Initiative, the Referendum, and the Recall—a combination of mischievous agencies that promotes irresponsible public clamor and insures the reign of mob rule. Operating through a series of years it has degraded the standards of public service, destroyed courageous and responsible leadership, disintegrated party organizations or converted them into makeshift aggregations of place-hunters, rendered political candidates and officials time-serving cowards or intriguing opportunists, and dissolved all coherence and continuity in the conduct of government and the course of rational civilization. A fractional percentage of the voting population can initiate any kind of a law, however vicious or visionary, and, by appealing to the basest passions and vilest prejudices of an ignorant multitude, compel the politicians to support it and delude the people into adopting it, in destruction of constitutional safeguards and inalienable rights.

Normally and nominally Oregon is a Republican State by a majority of at least 100,000, yet time and again the Democrats have carried it by pandering to some transitory fad, faction, or fanaticism, upon which party allegiance could be disrupted and diverted. They repeated that proceeding in the campaign and election upon this school measure, with the aid of secret and lawless fraternities devoted to the propagation of racial and religious hatreds, and a false conception of the State's duty and power in public education.

In the Republican primaries Governor Olcott was opposed for the nomination by Mr. Hall, the avowed champion of the Ku Klux Klan, and he defeated the latter by the small margin of about 600 votes, his success being generally ascribed to his courageous denunciation of the Klan just before the election. At once Hall alleged fraud and illegality in the balloting, especially claiming that the Catholics had invaded the Republican primaries by casting Democratic votes for Olcott. He procured an order of court for a recount of the returns, but this had proceeded only a little while when it was disclosed that the fraud had been perpetrated by Hall's followers and that he would lose votes by

a further recount. He dropped the contest and announced himself an independent candidate for Governor, particularly favoring the school bill. Meantime Mr. Pierce had been nominated by the Democrats, and it was obvious that his chances of success were vastly greater with both Olcott and Hall in the race against him. His views on the school question were not known, but the Ku Klux had become discouraged by Hall's failure in the recount and his want of consistency in bolting the Republican nomination, and they turned to Pierce as a stronger candidate if he could be induced to indorse the school bill. He responded to their overtures by declaring in support of this measure. Hall withdrew in his favor, and thus the issue was squarely drawn between Olcott and Pierce, with the school bill as the critical point of division. Taxation was much discussed, but merely as a "blind" behind which to conduct a crusade of religious bigotry and State autocracy in education. After the primaries Governor Olcott gave utterance to no opinions on the educational controversy, nor did he renew his attack upon the Ku Klux. If he had received the solid support of his party in the election he ought to have won by 130,000 majority, whereas Pierce beat him by 31,000.

A singular feature of the campaign was that Pierce's leading supporters and committeemen claimed to be opposed to the bill, while those in the Olcott organization, especially in Multnomah county, were in favor of it.

The result showed clearly that the great majority of the Republicans voted for the measure, together with all the nondescript political elements allied with the Ku Klux, and the thick-and-thin Democratic partisans. The 30,000 Catholics and the decent, independent non-Catholics, to the number of 62,000, voted against it.

It was carried because, under the "Oregon System," wherever it is allowed full and logical sway, there can be no party responsibility, no honesty or courage among party leaders, no fixed principles or policies in legislation and government. Prejudice, faction, fanatical cliques and clandestine conspiracies run riot, when the direct primary and the initiative method of law-making realize their fruition. In such an environment organizations like the Scottish Rite and the Ku Klux Klan find their appointed spheres of evil activity, and are able to achieve their triumphs of un-American intolerance and proscription.

A small group of the Scottish Rite, closely allied with the Ku Klux, openly assumed the authorship and advocacy of the bill to destroy the private schools, and they spent

much money and elaborate publicity in support of the measure. The Masonic fraternity, however, as a whole did not sponsor the movement, and some of the ablest and most representative Masons in the State publicly opposed it. The Lutherans, the Adventists, the Episcopalians, most of the leading Presbyterians, and the prominent business men and taxpayers were arrayed against it, as also were most of the farmers. The Baptists were divided, some of them being bitterly anti-Catholic, while the Campbellites or Christians were the most vindictive and vicious defamers of the Catholic Church and her institutions. The Methodists were neutral or quiescent, due to the fact that they were conducting a campaign for popular subscriptions to a large endowment fund for Willamette University; but it was understood that their chief representatives were opposed to the bill. With such a medley of discordant and complicated factors entering into the struggle, the result of the election was involved in doubt from the first, and the final adoption of the measure was not a victory to boast of.

One of the controlling elements in the contest was the fact that Multnomah county, in which is located the City of Portland, has forty per cent of the voting population of the State, and like all urban constituencies it includes the lowest and the most disorderly types of citizenship.

A potent influence in the election, as it was cunningly contrived it should be, was the false and misleading title given to the bill. It was called on the official ballot a "Compulsory Education Bill," notwithstanding Oregon has had for half a century an adequate and satisfactory system of compulsory education, under which all children between nine and fifteen years of age must attend the public free schools, or private schools that maintain the same standards and teach the same studies as the public schools, subject to the inspection and supervision of the State authorities. The effect of this deceptive name misled thousands of voters, and created such confusion in the minds of thousands of others that they refrained from voting at all. Also, it served to put the opponents of the measure in a false light before the general public, by making it appear that they were warring against compulsory education in the free public schools. That cry was the chief weapon of the advocates of the bill, particularly against the Catholics. All through the campaign it was insisted that the opponents of the legislation were the enemies of the great American system of popular instruction, the basis of our civilization and the bulwark of our national safety. Editorials from the Hearst Sunday

newspapers were reprinted, declaring that "nothing else matters beside the public schools—the National capitol, the Congress, the Washington Monument, even the Constitution are of no importance in comparison with compulsory education."

The open and avowed support of the measure was conducted in the name of the Scottish Rite Masons by one man, who signed all of the literature, advertisements and other propaganda, but behind this mask of seeming respectability the Ku Klux Klan followed its devious and dirty work of defamation, falsehood, and rabid malice towards Catholicism. It published several newspapers in the smaller towns, circulated the "Menace," the "Searchlight," the "Patriotic Voter," and like filthy sheets on the streets, and sponsored lectures by "ex-nuns" whose unspeakable vulgarity and mendacity had no relation to the school question, but gratified the hatred and inflamed the prejudice of the morbid and the malicious. The School Board of Portland granted the use of the public school halls for the infamous addresses of Emma Schoffen, alias "Sister Lucretia," over the protest of Catholics and notwithstanding they did not in any way pertain to the educational issue. The Scottish Rite man who fathered the campaign for the bill had for his wife a lady educated in the Catholic Academy at Portland; the school director who made so many speeches villifying the Church and attacking private schools had two of his daughters in a private school; while the head of the Ku Klux organization in the State had sent two of his daughters to St. Mary's Catholic Academy, and his son was in school at Hill's Military Academy all during the campaign. These inconsistencies, however, did not seem to affect the persons concerned or the general public.

At the beginning of the campaign the authors of the bill stoutly asserted that there was no religious issue at stake, that they had no purpose to interfere with anybody's religious freedom or liberty of conscience. Of course this deceived no intelligent observer of the situation, for it was universally recognized that the motive of the measure was to destroy Catholic parochial schools, and that in this determination the fanatics supporting the movement were willing to sacrifice all other private institutions. Before the struggle ended the mask was thrown off, and the attacks upon the Catholic Church became incredibly fierce and unscrupulous. Also, by degrees the more intelligent among the advocates of the bill disclosed the real principle and purpose underlying the proposed law, namely, that the child

belongs to the State; that parents have no natural or paramount interest in their children, as compared with the supreme interest which the government has in their standardized and stereotyped education as creatures and slaves of State autocracy; that religion and morality are negligible factors in modern education, or at best are domestic and personal virtues in which the State has no concern and should not include in its category of civic requirements.

By the time the election came off it was fairly obvious to most people who had studied the arguments and analyzed the meaning of the proposed law, that the bill originated in and was supported by the modern doctrine of sociological evolution, according to which religion is a relic of primitive superstition, doomed to extinction under any perfected development of the social order; that the individual, from the cradle to the grave, is the product of heredity and environment; that the State, as the representative of organized society, must take possession of children, to the exclusion of mere parental authority, and so educate them as to furnish the highest type of efficiency in service to the public welfare; and that, since private schools do not conform their instruction to this theory, but cling to the old-fashioned standards of spiritual, moral and intellectual responsibility of the child to the God who had made him and the natural rights of parents who hold him in trust for that Creator, such unscientific institutions must be suppressed by State ownership of children and State monopoly of education.

That is the real genesis of such legislation as the Oregon school law just adopted.

Probably only a few of those who favored it fathomed deep enough into its meaning and object to understand this phase of the subject. That is the theoretical or academic aspect of the question; the practical and obvious motive uppermost in the minds of the majority who voted for the bill was a crude, brutal, blind and unreasoning desire to strike a fatal blow at the Catholic Church by destroying the sources of her vitality and growth. But the theorists and rationalists are animated by a hostility to Catholicism that is equally as bitter, and more dangerous because more intelligent and insidious. They include the materialistic forces of American infidelity, the believers in the extreme theory of monistic evolution, the champions of autocratic State control of education by a Federalized system of schools, the National Education Association, the advocates of eugenics and birth control, and in short by that aggregation of radicals and revolutionaries called Modernism, which Pope

Pius X justly denominated "the synthesis of all heresies."

It is a formidable coalition, and its power for evil is vastly enhanced by the favorite nostrums of modern political quackery like the Initiative, the Referendum, and the Direct Primary. Naturally and logically its main attack is concentrated upon the Catholic Church, as the only unchangeable representative of those things it seeks to destroy in the lives of men and nations. In this age of unrest and ferment, in the wreck and welter of a war that shook the foundations of civilization and left the world in a state of chaos and angry tumult worse even than the carnage of battle, the Church alone remains unshaken and unshakable, the sanctuary of faith and hope for mankind, the sole champion of supernatural truth and of God's final authority in the government of the universe. What wonder, then, that she should find herself the victim of assault by the emissaries of human pride and prejudice?

The school bill in Oregon and similar movements elsewhere are but surface manifestations of a struggle more dire than has ever confronted the Faith of the Fathers, since the days of its sacrificial triumphs over the persecutions of Roman despots. If that bill had failed, or if it shall be declared void and unconstitutional by the courts—as seems reasonably certain—the struggle will continue in some other phase and with increasing ferocity, and Catholics had as well understand and prepare for the conflict that lies ahead of them all over the country.

It is worth while to notice and to remember some of the practical lessons of the Catholic campaign in Oregon, for they ought to be valuable there and elsewhere in the future. At the outset there was disclosed the weakness of the Church as a political force—the lack of unity in counsel and solidarity in action that characterizes Catholics everywhere, in the United States at least. It is not easy to analyze the reasons for this, but its disastrous effects were felt all through the campaign, although towards the last our people found themselves and worked with harmony and zeal. The outstanding feature of this Catholic short-coming in a political struggle seems to be the inability of the average Catholics to understand and form contact with the non-Catholic public. They think and reason along different lines upon public questions involving religious issues; they occupy an attitude of detachment and isolation towards the outside world, they fail to make themselves an integral factor in the formation and control of public opinion; they appear to be separate and apart from the general movements that en-

gross and direct the interest of their Protestant and non-Catholic fellow-citizens. A few of them engage in political activities and mix freely in the affairs and contests of State and nation and in the pursuits of big business; but just in proportion as they do this they seem to lose identity with the Catholic fellowship, and to undergo a subtle loss of religious loyalty and zeal, which engenders suspicion and resentment among other Catholics not so disposed. It is certain that hereditary Catholics do not realize this trait of their character, and are wholly unconscious of its effects in creating a gulf between them and the world of politics and social agitation. The converts see it and feel it at once, and the non-Catholic public knows it, resents it, and takes advantage of it in all such struggles as that in which the Church was engaged in Oregon. It is natural and perhaps necessary that the clergy should observe this aloofness from worldly conflicts, although the most influential priests in the community in which they live do not carry this exclusiveness to an extreme. There is absolutely no reason why the Catholic laity should not recognize and take their full part in the activities of society and the problems of State, and their habitual indifference in this respect robs them of political power, leads to misunderstandings and lack of sympathy on both sides of every religious controversy that gets into politics—and in this country all questions are likely to become political—and renders them helpless when the stress of a bitter anti-Catholic campaign is forced upon the Church.

Our people are too sensitive and self-conscious in the matter of their religious faith and institutions, and they are more or less morbid on the subject, often imagining affronts and assuming antagonisms that do not exist. The non-Christian in this country is not half as much interested in the Catholic religion as many of us suppose, and there is not nearly so much hostility to our institutions and practices as most Catholics take for granted.

The true and practical attitude of Catholic citizens in their relations to government, laws, political issues, and civic rights should be that of religious independence and intellectual courage, refusing to admit that a man's religion has any more to do with his political affiliations or his civil status than the color of his hair and eyes; for, as a matter of fundamental American principles, it has not.

The sooner Catholics identify themselves with public and political affairs, mingle fearlessly in the interests and rivalries of the community, and forget about their religious sep-

aration while so occupied, the better they will be understood by non-Catholics and the better they will understand the latter.

The effects of the condition above described are displayed in two ways: it renders Catholics timid and cowardly in asserting their secular rights, afraid to acknowledge their faith and to defend it openly and bravely lest it should injure their business, affect their social influence, or expose them to insult and humiliation; and it alienates the confidence and respect of non-Catholics of liberal principles, while it emboldens anti-Catholic bigots to charge that our people are un-American and unpatriotic in their allegiance to Rome.

In July, when it became necessary to decide upon a plan of organization and work, two opposing policies developed in the counsels of the executive committee. One element was for a passive and complaisant campaign, for keeping the Catholic activity, and pursuing a sort of let-alone, camouflaged attitude on the question. It was even protested that the use of the name "Catholic" should be avoided. On the other hand there were those who favored an aggressive and militant assertion of Catholicism, a defense of Catholic dogmas, discipline and institutions, and putting the religious issue to the front as the paramount subject of discussion. Either course of action would have proved fatal, and it is doubtful which would have been the worse. Everybody knew that the bill was directed at the Catholic parochial schools and inspired by rank prejudice and intolerance; so it was foolish, cowardly, and poor politics to evade that issue and seek to conceal the Catholic opposition to the measure by subterfuge or silence. If, however, the religious and doctrinal aspects of the issue were emphasized, if the Church sought to introduce into the campaign a discussion and defense of her teachings and practices as a spiritual organization, and engaged in a violent and intemperate expression of her indignation at the falsehood and bigotry that were at the bottom of the proposed law, it would only serve to further inflame public prejudice, would create side issues and irrelevant controversies, and cause the whole campaign to turn upon a religious quarrel, about which, in no age or country, have men ever been able to think clearly or to reason fairly. The true issue involved was that of the natural and inalienable right of parents to educate their children according to their conscientious conception of parental and religious duty, and the American constitutional principle of religious freedom and equality. It was fundamentally a

question of civic rights, and religion was involved only as its free enjoyment is included in the political and civil status of every American citizen. When a man consents to have his religious beliefs and methods of worship called in question, and enters upon a defense of them in a secular forum, he at once surrenders his constitutional security and practically abdicates his spiritual liberty. That is true Americanism as applied to any problem of this kind, and upon that doctrine Catholics and all other religionists, or those with no religion at all, can safely rest their rights so long as constitutional government endures in this Republic. After considerable debate and difference of judgment, this view prevailed in the formation and plan of campaign of the "Catholic Civic Rights Association of Oregon."

The method of organizing the Catholic forces in the State was quite simple, and very effective where it was carried out faithfully and intelligently. The parish furnished a convenient unit of organization, and there were some 130 parishes in Oregon. In each of these the pastor was requested to appoint two executive committees, of ten members each, one composed of men and the other of women, and these persons were required to sign a pledge accepting the appointments and promising diligent service. Where there were several parishes in a county, they were required to form a central executive committee for the entire county, and the parochial committees were convened in a body for conference as often as possible. As soon as these committees were constituted and organized, they were required to make a house-to-house, personal canvass of all the voters living in their respective territories, both Catholics and non-Catholics. The purpose of this was to ascertain how many of our own people were registered and to put all of them to work among their friends and neighbors; to obtain an accurate census of all non-Catholics and their attitude on the school question, what arguments seemed to be most influential in determining their attitude, and what kind of literature would be most likely to procure their opposition to the bill. A system of three cards was provided for this work—white cards for the Catholics, blue cards for non-Catholics who seemed undecided or open to conviction, and yellow cards for the pronounced and incorrigible bigots. Each card contained blanks for the names of the voters, their addresses and phones, their voting precincts, whether registered or not, their attitude on the school question, and the names and addresses of the Catholics who interviewed them, with dates. The cards were sent to the parish committees in

duplicate, one copy, when made out properly, to be kept on file by the local committees, and the other to be returned to the State headquarters in Portland. To insure thoroughness and accuracy, duplicate lists of all the qualified voters in the State were procured from the Secretary of State at Salem, one set of which was divided up and sent to the counties and parishes and the other was kept at headquarters. By checking up their local canvass of the voters with these official lists, the committee could verify their work as they went along with it. It was with great difficulty that some of the committees and parishioners could be prevailed upon to follow the instructions for carrying out this plan, but by degrees most of them fell in with the program, and wherever it was conducted in the proper detail it proved a success beyond expectation.

The main literary propaganda used by us in the campaign was the pamphlet called "24 Reasons," of which there was printed and distributed more than half a million copies. The Archbishop's Pastoral Letter, Father O'Hara's address on "Freedom of Education," Sam Small's Letter to the *Atlanta Constitution* on religious bigotry, and other publications were freely circulated, and we also mailed and distributed by hand many thousands of the Lutheran pamphlet, the Adventist's magazine, the pamphlet of the Protestant and Non-Sectarian Schools Committee, and special copies of newspapers and magazines containing articles against the bill. It was a laborious and expensive task and kept everybody busy.

There was a difficulty in getting Catholic speakers to canvass outside of Portland, as few of them could quit their business and not many of them understood exactly how to reach the mixed audiences.

One noticeable fact stands out from the entire struggle. Wherever an open, bold, uncompromising fight was made by the Catholics, in the proper spirit of loyalty to the great American principles of religious freedom and equality, and in defense of the natural rights of parenthood, the result was favorable; but wherever a "pussy-footing," "gumshoe," compromising method of campaigning was pursued, disaster and defeat were overwhelming. The adoption of the bill was defeated in the Ku Klux strongholds of Jackson and Umatilla counties by the former course of conduct, while it was carried by immense majorities in Douglas and Coos counties where the contrary policy prevailed.

It should be remembered that the Catholics of Oregon fought this battle single-handed and unaided. A few per-

sonal friends of priests in Oregon sent small contributions from other sections, but all told not \$200 was donated from abroad.

But the passage of the bill, all things considered, was not a decisive or discouraging defeat. It will no doubt be declared void in the courts, and meanwhile the Catholic Church in Oregon was never so strong as she is today; Catholics were never so united, loyal, vitalized, and awake to their duties and rights as American citizens; never before was there such wide-spread sympathy and understanding towards Catholics by the Protestant and non-Catholic population of that State. It is but another demonstration of the truth of the saying of the historian, Froude—"The Catholic Church is like a kite, it rises ever against the wind." Whatever mistakes, short-comings, weaknesses were disclosed among the Faithful during the campaign, were the defects of human nature; the strength and vitality of the Church, Divine in their origin and nature, were immutable and unimpaired.

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